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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 000132

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STATE FOR AF/EPS, AF/W AND OES NANCY POWELL
AID/W FOR AFR
USDA ALSO FOR APHIS
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2016

TAGS: TBIO KFLU FAID AMED EAGR GA

SUBJECT: SUSPECTED AVIAN INFLUENZA CASES IN THE GAMBIA

Classified By: Consular Section Chief Christopher Zimmer, reason 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: We have received credible reports of suspected Avian Influenza (AI) cases in The Gambia, although the Secretary of State for Health adamantly denies the validity of these reports. Bird samples from an undisclosed area were reportedly sent on 1 March 2006 to labs in the UK to test for AI. Embassy staff early this week reported seeing large numbers of dead poultry in Tanji village along the coast. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) FAO Resident Representative Mr. David Bowen, reported to Conoff that dead birds were being sent today, 1 March 2006, to London for AI testing. These are the first suspected cases of AI in The Gambia. There are no labs in the country with the ability to test for AI. Bowen's source is a veterinary doctor from the Ministry of Agriculture who is also heading FAO's technical cooperation project with Government of The Gambia (GoTG). Bowen did not know the area where the birds were found.

¶3. (C) GoTG contacts in the Agriculture and Health Ministries denied knowledge of any outbreaks when asked to confirm a February 28 Reuter's story that WHO was investigating suspected outbreaks in The Gambia. The WHO office in The Gambia was unaware of any investigations of outbreaks and the WHO Director, Dr. Mamo Jawla, is currently traveling in South Africa.

¶4. (C) An Embassy employee reported seeing significant numbers of dead poultry in Tanji village along the Atlantic Coast, about 15 kilometers from Banjul, over the weekend. Post reported this to the Permanent Secretary for Health. He denied knowledge of an outbreak but said the Department would investigate. Subsequently, ConOff received a call from the Secretary of State for Health vehemently denying any

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suspected cases of Avian Influenza in The Gambia.

¶5. (C) COMMENT. Embassy believes that the reports from the FAO representative and the Embassy employee are reliable and will seek confirmation from contacts at other Embassies and organizations and follow up accordingly. END COMMENT.

STAFFORD